

## OVER MORE TEA

my mother called this morning and told me  
not to come over for dinner today, said she'd  
be over to see me, alone, since there was  
terrible trouble between her and my father  
again, stemming from a visit recently by  
some of my mother's family. seems my uncle  
steve, the baby in the family of thirteen  
children, had shown too much love for  
my mother, driving my father crazy  
with jealousy. an orphan at seven,  
and having been brought up by relatives who  
might just as well have been strangers,  
my father's not a man who understands or wants to  
accept the deeper expressions of love.  
so, my mother arrived around eleven, and  
we sat drinking tea for a while,  
and then we drove down to the chinese  
restaurant in phoenicia, and by a window  
facing the street we ordered steamed  
dumplings and stuffed tofu skins.  
it was raining out, and we talked about what  
the weather of summer had been like and  
what we thought was in store for us in  
the upcoming winter. over more tea  
she told me that uncle steve had told her  
that she had been the one child in  
the family who had looked like my grandmother.  
and she remembered uncle steve as being  
one of the boys who had done  
the tunneling out to the chicken  
coop during the big snowstorms,  
to feed the chickens and to make sure  
the chickens were getting enough  
air. what good were suffocated chickens.  
eventually he went into the air  
force, married a beautiful young  
woman from a neighboring town  
and raised three daughters.  
my father has spent the last  
two days in his room  
drunk on table wine.  
his father died from drinking  
over the death of his wife  
who had died from cancer.  
i heard myself tell my  
mother that i think  
i'm very much like my father,  
and my grandfather.